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BOOK NOTICES.

The Song of the Ancient People by Edna Dean Proctor with Preface and Notes by John Fiske and Commentary by F H Cushing Illustrated with eleven Aquatints by Julian Scott Boston and New York 1893

The review of a poem would ordinarily not come within the province of a journal devoted to science, but "The Song of the Ancient People" is so strictly based on modern ethnological researches that we feel we may make an exception in its favor and treat of it in the pages of **THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST**.

We have long been impressed with the idea that efforts to put the American Indian into poetry have not been eminently successful. Some of the greatest poetic geniuses of our nation have made the attempt without adding to their reputation. The causes for this are difficult to assign. The Indian has done good service in prose fiction, but he has refused to move easily in the shackles of verse.

We think Miss Proctor has succeeded better than any of her predecessors in producing a poem with the Indian for its subject. This success is due, no doubt, in part to the literary skill of the author; but it is also largely due to the fact that she has made a new departure. Heretofore poets have dwelt mostly on the combative and revengeful elements of the Indian character and have overlooked his contemplative and religious nature. In Miss Proctor's poem there is no flashing of angry eyes, no calling upon gods that never existed in the Indian pantheon, no muttering of curses that Indians never knew till white men taught them, no digging up of hatchets; in short, none of the worn-out stage properties with which we are so well and wearily acquainted. The poetess sings of higher and more romantic elements in the American autochthon; of his pride and confidence in his own savage lore and philosophy; of his reverence for the gods of his fathers; of his faith in the picturesque paganism which is his heritage; and, lastly, of his brave resignation to a fate which he beholds approaching and knows he cannot avert. For her Indian there is no Messiah. He bows his head proudly and awaits the stroke.

The poem is in the form of a monologue addressed to the Caucasian intruder by a Pueblo Indian of the Southwest, most probably an inhabitant of the pueblo of Zuñi; but the author leaves us in some doubt as to the exact home of her hero. The poetic execution is of a superior character and shows the work of a skillful hand. The scientific exactness of the composition is vouched for by the well-known "Zufí Familiar," Mr. Frank Hamilton Cushing, who appends to Miss Proctor's poem an interesting "Commentary," in which we find only words of approval. Many allusions in the poem, not familiar to the general reader, are explained in the notes by Mr. John Fiske.

Scarcely less to be praised than the rhyme of the poet is the page of the artist, the famous battle-scene and portrait painter, Mr. Julian Scott, who has embellished this beautiful publication with eleven full-page aquatints. Previous to undertaking this work Mr. Scott spent two seasons in New Mexico and Arizona studying the peculiar landscape and atmospheric effects of this region, as well as the dress, figures, faces, and surroundings of "The Ancient People" themselves. His faithful illustrations are the result of these studies.

The publishers have done their share to make the book attractive. Paper, typography, and binding are all in excellent taste, and represent the best work of the Riverside Press.

W. MATTHEWS.

Finger Prints. By Francis Galton, F. R. S., etc. London, Macmillan & Co., 1892.

The old legal maxim "*De minimis non curat lex*" has no application in science. There is nothing too minute to escape examination, description, and classification. Mr. Galton, with his characteristic industry, accuracy, and power of marshalling facts, has now published the results of his observations, extending over several years, upon those curiously curved minute furrows found upon the palmar surface of the ends of the fingers.

It has been long supposed that different individuals were characterized by special patterns of these markings, indeed they have occasionally been used for purposes of identification. Mr. Galton has put the matter to the proof of experiment and finds that when